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General Assembly

Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

43rd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 28 November 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Román-Morey (Peru), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 14, 113 and 119 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

(a) Notes by the Secretary-General (A/67/82 and A/67/270)

(b) Draft resolution (A/67/L.25)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

(a) Reports of the Secretary-General (A/67/201 and A/67/257)

(b) Note by the Secretary-General (A/67/373)

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Mr. Och (Mongolia): First of all, I wish to extend my delegation's great appreciation to the Secretary-General for his annual report (A/67/257) entitled "Accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals". I believe that our discussions, based on a thorough and comprehensive review and assessment of what has been achieved and which goals remain out of reach, will provoke new ideas on how we can scale up our efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and implementing other outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

As we can see from the report, the international community should undertake targeted and scaled-up action to alleviate the burden of those in need and should promptly implement all commitments under the global partnership for development in order to support national efforts, in particular commitments in the areas of aid, trade, debt relief and access to new technologies. According to the Secretary-General's report, that means that official development assistance flows will have to be more than doubled in order to meet the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent.

We need to be innovative and find ways to do more with limited resources. In our efforts to accelerate progress towards the MDGs, we need to take into account the results of surveys and studies undertaken by various United Nations agencies and research centres. In that connection, according to a report launched this year by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities — *State of World Population 2012* — ensuring the availability of voluntary family planning to everyone in developing countries would reduce the costs for maternal and newborn health care by $11.3 billion annually. The report also emphasizes that family planning is more than merely an economic issue and is connected to human rights and access to education. It also estimates that 3 million fewer babies would die in their first year of life if 120 million more women had access to family planning.

My delegation also wishes to express its gratitude to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) for the report contained in document A/67/373, which was prepared and submitted for consideration

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under the agenda item entitled "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit". That report states that non-communicable diseases threaten the population and fiscal health of all nations, and that greater action in all countries and by all stakeholders therefore remains imperative. The outcome document of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want" (A/CONF.216/16), also acknowledges that the global burden of non-communicable diseases constitutes one of the major challenges for development today.

It is obvious that the primary role in, and responsibility for, responding to the challenge of non-communicable diseases resides with national Governments. But the complexity of the challenges posed by such diseases calls for actions of a multisectoral nature and for multi-stakeholder partnerships beyond Governments. My delegation therefore believes that the five models for global partnerships against non-communicable diseases proposed in the report should be given due consideration.

The report provides interesting examples of cross-sectoral Government engagement to reduce the risk factors for non-communicable diseases, which are tobacco use, physical inactivity, alcohol abuse and an unhealthy diet. According to the report, a survey conducted by WHO in 2010 found that 86 per cent of countries have some form of partnerships or collaborations for implementing key activities. Eighty-three per cent of countries address tobacco use, 81 per cent address diabetes, 77 per cent address unhealthy diet, 77 per cent address cancer and 75 per cent address physical inactivity.

In Mongolia, particular efforts are also being made to reduce the risks of alcohol abuse, which has serious implications for our country and the health of future generations. It has become one of the major factors contributing to accidents, traffic injuries, crime, violence and unemployment. Studies in Mongolia have shown that alcohol abuse is also associated with poverty. Our efforts in that regard include, among others, the nationwide promotion of public education against alcohol consumption and an increase in the taxes on alcohol. In 2011, the President of Mongolia issued an appeal calling for abstention from alcohol, which received wide support from the Government, the private health sector and civil society organizations.

I would like to inform this body that, last year, during the High-level Meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, Mongolia put forward an idea for developing an international convention on the control of alcohol consumption, similar to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. We earnestly hope that that idea will receive due consideration within the framework of WHO in the coming years. My Government remains fully committed to cooperating on that matter.

While accelerating our efforts towards achieving all of the MDGs worldwide, we must also work on the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. My delegation highly appreciates the steps undertaken by the Secretary-General in this regard. We believe that the work of the United Nations System Task Team on that topic greatly contributes to the ongoing processes of consultation at various levels.

Four interconnected core dimensions proposed by the Task Team can serve as the basis for the definition of the goals and targets of future agendas. To support the implementation of the agenda, as the Secretary-General highlighted in his report, the global partnership for development would need to be strengthened as a responsibility shared by all countries and involving all stakeholders through a well-defined accountability framework. We also look forward to the report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the topic in 2013.

Furthermore, we believe that greener and more sustainable economic development should be adequately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda in order to address the widely shared need to work towards a single unified global development agenda with sustainable development at its core. We also support the observation that we should have an inclusive, open and transparent process with multi-stakeholder participation through national, regional and global forums, other intergovernmental processes and special General Assembly meetings on development. In that respect, we are looking forward with great expectation to the outcome of a special event to be convened during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly in September 2013.

Our national implementation of the MDGs has been evidenced by our fourth national report, which noted that 77.9 per cent of the targets had been met, thus providing a positive effect on the nation's development.

Unfortunately, regression has been seen in terms of some of the targets, and it is expected that some will

not be met if the current pace continues. Those targets include MDG 1, on halving poverty, and MDG 7, on ensuring environmental sustainability and eliminating pollution, which have become issues of concern for every Mongolian. That calls for stepped-up national action and a greater focus on multilateral partnership. Furthermore, the implementation of our MDGs-based comprehensive national development strategy up to 2021 is expected to lay the foundation for strengthened, inclusive, equitable and sustainable development in Mongolia beyond 2015.

In conclusion, may I reiterate my delegation's strong resolve to work together with fellow Member States towards strengthening the United Nations system, so that it remains an effective centre for advancing the development agenda around the world in the years to come.

Mr. Wangchuk (Bhutan): I shall confine my comments to agenda item 14, entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields", and the follow-up to resolution 65/309.

The fundamental goal of every person is to lead a fulfilling, meaningful and happy life is. In fact, that is what makes us human. It was therefore fitting that, on 19 July 2011, through the unanimous adoption of resolution 65/309, entitled "Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development", this body resolved that it was time to accept well-being and happiness as a fundamental and universal goal that binds all of humankind with a common vision and the quest for a holistic, sustainable and inclusive approach to development.

A few months ago, the General Assembly also declared 20 March as the International Day of Happiness (resolution 66/281). That day is an opportunity for humankind to celebrate every precious component that makes life worth living and to strive for genuine happiness.

Mandated by resolution 65/309, Bhutan was honoured to host a meeting on 2 April, at United Nations Headquarters, on the theme "Happiness and well-being: defining a new economic paradigm". The meeting was a gathering of 800 extraordinary minds, including world leaders, members of academia and concerned citizens, moved by the urgent need for change to a global path that focuses more on human well-being and happiness.

Pursuant to the recommendation of that meeting, His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck established an international expert working group, made up of 50 thought leaders of the world. They have been given the crucial responsibility of elaborating the details of the proposed new development approach in the coming two years. Simultaneously, His Majesty the King also appointed a national steering committee to guide and support the process.

The working group will elaborate and refine the four themes, namely, well-being and happiness, ecological sustainability, fair distribution and the efficient use of resources. It will prepare a detailed report on how the new development approach can work in practice. It will also explore accounting and assessment systems, regulatory and financial mechanisms, and trade, governance and institutional arrangements. We believe that the findings will complement and contribute to the current efforts of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons and the open working group on sustainable development goals and the United Nations post-2015 development agenda.

We welcome with appreciation the note of the Secretary-General on the pursuit of well-being and happiness, which is available via the website of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. We are greatly encouraged by the number of initiatives undertaken by Member States and international organizations.

Bhutan remains fully committed to the promotion of a sustainable and progressive human civilization within a peaceful and secure environment. To advance that endeavour, Bhutan is prepared to further share its experience and modest development achievements.

In that regard, Bhutan would like to initiate a draft procedural resolution on well-being and happiness in the plenary of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. The draft resolution will pursue the allocation of a new agenda sub-item on the topic under sustainable development. We seek the valuable support of the Assembly in adopting a consensus resolution to better capture the importance of the universal goal of every human being, namely, the pursuit of well-being and happiness.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): I take the floor to speak on the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/67/201. At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and to compliment him

for his extremely informative and well analysed report on strengthening the institutional arrangements for the support of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

When we established the edifice of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), last year, through resolution 64/289, we had envisaged it to be an ambitious, results-oriented and dynamic entity advancing the cause of gender equality and women's empowerment globally. Today, as we near the second operational year of UN-Women, my delegation is happy to note the significant milestones that the entity has achieved under the dynamic leadership of Ms. Bachelet, in such a short span of time.

The ways in which UN-Women has been able to influence policy narratives across the globe, whether on issues such as women's rights in developing countries, services for gender-based violence survivors in the occupied Palestinian territory, or in championing the rights of indigenous women in Ecuador, have certainly achieved small, yet significant, milestones in a brief but important journey.

In the South Asia region, UN-Women's work in areas ranging from political participation and leadership, economic empowerment, ending violence against women and gender responsive annual budgeting has been enabling critical factors in terms of shaping national policy narratives.

In that regard, allow me to place on record the sincerest appreciation for UN-Women of my nodal Ministry, namely, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, for their active partnership and constructive advice in the working group on our twelfth plan's chapter on women's agency and empowerment. Its agenda of making gender equality a lived reality finds resonance in the overall policy approach of the Government of India. That agenda has also been outlined in the twelfth five-year plan of my country.

UN-Women, in partnership with the Government of India, has enabled more than half a million elected women representatives in five States of India to realize their rights and develop their leadership skills through the Promoting Women's Political Leadership and Governance in India and South Asia programme. By the end of this year, nearly 365 million Indian women will have been empowered by the programme, which is designed to build the capacity of those women. They are now equipped with the knowledge and skills to participate in local governance. UN-Women's programme on the Dalit Women's Livelihood Accountability Initiative has been assessed as highly effective in increasing women's access to entitlements provided as part of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and in securing livelihoods for many underprivileged families.

In the field of political empowerment, in States with the largest proportion of women in the population, such as Bihar and Orissa, UN-Women has helped women candidates to file nominations and manage electoral campaigns in local Panchayat elections through a campaign assisted by civil society partners.

In terms of macropolicy partnerships within the Government, support from UN-Women to the Gender Responsive Budgeting initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development has also helped various ministries develop in-house expertise. Through UN-Women's training programmes and continuous interaction, more than 500 Government counterparts have been trained in gender budgeting.

As we draw close to the end of the second operational year of UN-Women, my delegation is satisfied to note the progress achieved by that entity as it scales up its operations and embarks on the pursuit of its mandate. While we are fully conscious that the task at hand is enormous, my delegation is encouraged by the progress made in reinstating the leading role of the United Nations in pursuing gender equality and the empowerment of women under the able leadership of Ms. Michelle Bachelet.

India is home to more than 500 million women, and we are firmly convinced that ensuring the rightful place of women in society is not only a moral imperative but also an essential prerequisite for achieving peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

Our well-recognized success in the political empowerment of women is transforming the traditional and entrenched power dynamic in both rural and urban India. Women are finding their rightful place in all walks of professional and political life, ranging from the highest echelons of the corporate empire to the Government bureaucracy. They occupy the highest offices in India, including, at present, those of the Speaker of the lower house of Parliament and the leader of the opposition and, until a few months back, the Office of the President of India. More importantly, today,

more than 1 million women serve on local Government bodies, where they exercise decision-making authority on an almost daily basis.

Let me conclude by reaffirming India's steadfast commitment to the global, regional and national efforts to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report. We assure members that India will not be found wanting in support and cooperation in realizing the shared vision that Member States envisaged in the creation of UN-Women.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with resolution 57/32, of 19 November 2002, I now call on the observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Johnsson (Inter-Parliamentary Union): I take the floor to speak on agenda item 113, on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit. When the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) was adopted in 2000, it was greeted with great hope. An important highlight was, of course, the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a set of commitments that all countries could realistically achieve within the span of 15 years.

With only three years left until the target date for the implementation of the MDGs, the record is mixed. Globally, some of the Goals appear to be on track but the picture becomes less clear the moment we look at the individual scorecards of most countries. With only a short time left before 2015, we cannot afford to waste a day. We must all collectively continue to work hard to fill significant gaps.

For several years now, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has helped raise awareness of the MDGs among parliamentarians. We have done that through a number of debates and resolutions that provide a consensus approach to the various Goals. We have also achieved that by helping parliaments strengthen their capacities to oversee Government action, adopt enabling legislation and make budgetary decisions that are in alignment with the development priorities of each country.

While recognizing that all of the Goals are important, we have chosen to focus particularly on the health-related Goals, that is, those on maternal and child mortality and HIV/AIDS, which, in our view, play a key role in removing a number of significant obstacles. In support of Goal 3, on gender equality and women's empowerment, we continue to invest considerable resources in promoting the participation of women in politics. We are also working to strengthen development cooperation as a key to the realization of the MDGs and, indeed, of the development agenda as a whole. That can be seen, for instance, in our very active engagement within the Development Cooperation Forum and, more recently, in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

Finally, and most critically, we have been working to evaluate some of the institutional mechanisms, such as parliamentary committees or caucuses, which may help parliaments organize their work around the MDGs through their key functions of oversight, legislation and representation. In many of those activities, we have enjoyed a good partnership with the United Nations, particularly the United Nations Development Programme and its Millennium Campaign.

While acceleration towards achieving the MDGs must remain our primary obligation at this critical junction, it is also important to take stock of lessons that we should have learned by now as the international community begins to chart a new post-2015 development framework. From the IPU perspective, the most important lesson has been that of ensuring the early involvement of parliaments in the shaping of development goals. That is critical in order to ensure national ownership and accountability across the board and will, eventually, also help support implementation through the whole legislative process. That is why we are very pleased to see that the resolution adopted in June on interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU contains a clear reference to encouraging parliaments to contribute to the design of the next generation of development goals (resolution 66/261).

In order to deliver on that call, the IPU has begun to work with parliaments to facilitate their involvement in the post-2015 development consultations now under way, both globally and at the country level. We welcome the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons, which has already begun its work, as well as the open working group that is tasked with focusing specifically on a new generation of sustainable development goals. Pursuant to both of those processes, we are planning a series of consultations with parliamentarians that will, hopefully, inject a strong parliamentary perspective into the deliberations.

Among other things, the IPU is working with the Millennium Campaign and other United Nations partners at the regional and the subregional levels to help gather the views of parliaments, with due regard for regional particularities. Consultations have already taken place in Africa and are under way in Asia. Another important building block in the process is the 128th IPU Assembly, to be held in Ecuador in March of next year and whose theme will be rethinking the development model in terms of well-being, rather than in terms of economic growth alone. Again, in cooperation with our United Nations partners, we will use the Assembly in Quito to compile a survey of parliamentarians and to discuss specific aspects of the future development framework at various moments during the general debate, as well as through a specialized workshop. Meanwhile, we are looking for practical ways to engage parliamentarians in the national consultations that are expected to take place by the end of next March, as well as in a number of electronic consultations that are in the pipeline at various United Nations sites. All of those efforts will culminate in next year's joint parliamentary hearing at the United Nations, here in New York, where parliamentarians from around the world will review the concrete proposals that are expected to emerge from the various United Nations processes.

As with Governments, the views of parliamentarians on the contents of a post-2015 development agenda can be expected to range widely both in scope and in direction. However, some issues have already arisen in our discussions, namely, the central roles of democracy and development cooperation. The problem of development is not only economic but also political. Unequal access to and participation in decision-making, which often flows out of an unequal distribution of incomes and wealth, confrontational politics where the winner takes all, and other such imbalances, are the root caused of many development failures. Because democratic governance must underpin all areas of development policy, it must also then find expression in the future sustainable development goals with clearly defined indicators or objectives. We propose to come back to the General Assembly at a future date with some suggestions as to how that can be done.

Equally important, the post-2015 development framework will have to be accompanied by a clear commitment to financing. Just as the MDGs have been handicapped by financing of both poor quality and insufficient quantity, the success of the future sustainable development goals will depend in part on the formulation of a successor goal to current MDG 8, on developing a global partnership for development. The new goal, however formulated, will of course need to reflect the current landscape of development cooperation, with its multiplicity of public and private actors and corresponding flows.

In conclusion, the next three years will be decisive, not only for the implementation of the current MDGs as a key platform of the original Millennium Declaration but also for the definition of a common vision of the future. As it became most evident at the Rio Conference on Sustainable Development last June, the world community is at a turning point in more ways than one, and strong leadership will be required as we approach some very difficult decisions. The Assembly can rest assured of the support of the IPU in the journey ahead.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/83 of 9 December 2003, I now call on the observer for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

Mr. Tommasoli (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance): The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) commends Mongolia for the leadership role that it has played in the promotion of the draft resolution on education for development (A/67/L.25), and welcomes the consideration of the draft resolution and its adoption. We strongly support the draft resolution's encouragement of the integration of education for democracy into national education standards and the development of national and subnational programmes through both curricular and extracurricular activities. Furthermore, given the mobility of students, existing regional institutional education frameworks and the limited harmonization of curricula, cooperation and collaboration in the field of education for democracy at the regional level should also be strengthened.

There is solid evidence that doing so can contribute to citizens' empowerment and their participation in political life and policymaking at all levels. Our experience, as well as the work of many United Nations funds, agencies and programmes, and other international organizations, shows that investing in education is important for both democracy and development. It is possibly the most effective way of simultaneously

generating impacts on human development and the consolidation of democratic institutions and processes.

The truth of that assertion can be seen from two different and interlinked perspectives: the right to education and the transformative power of education for the development of democratic governance. As regards the first perspective, any democratic constitution enshrines and guarantees the right to education. That is a fundamental issue for the assessment of whether economic and social rights are equally guaranteed for all. For example, the state-of-democracy assessment methodology developed by International IDEA and applied by citizens groups and organizations in over 20 countries, contains a question on how extensive and inclusive the right to education, including education in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, is in a given country. As witnessed by the debates on the constitutional reforms accompanying political transitions, not least in the Arab region, the constitutional dimension of the right to education is one of the most important issues addressed. It has a direct impact on an inclusive concept of citizenship, especially in relation to gender equality.

The second perspective — the transformative power of education for democracy — is particularly important for democracy-building and democracy assistance. In the electoral field it has a direct impact on democratic values, practices and behaviours. In fact,, education for democracy is directly linked to voter education and therefore contributes to one of most visible and traditional forms of democratic participation. But it is equally important in other areas of democracy-building, like parliamentary support and political party development. In fact, education for democracy and the consolidation of a democratic constitutional culture shape the institutions and the substance of democratic dialogue among political stakeholders. It should ultimately contribute to effective legislative and executive action within the framework of democratic accountability.

International IDEA, in partnership with the United Nations and other international actors, has developed a global training curriculum on electoral processes, known as Building Resources for Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE), which is widely used in political transitions for training election administrators using adult education techniques. It is no coincidence that one of the key modules of BRIDGE focuses on civic education, covering such areas as the rationale for citizen participation in the democratic processes; strategies for increasing the participation of key stakeholder groups and beneficiaries, including youth, media, women, and people with disabilities; and techniques for identifying the different educational needs of all stakeholders in civic education processes by considering both community-based and school-based civic education. That example underscores the importance of adult education alongside formal education for the attainment of the objectives set in the resolution that is being considered today. Education for democracy is, in fact, a lifelong endeavour.

In conclusion, International IDEA welcomes the recognition by the draft resolution that education is key to the strengthening of democratic institutions, the realization of human rights and the achievement of all international goals, including the MDGs. In the MDG context, education is an enabler at many levels. At the same time, education is also one of the goals of the MDG framework, with specific indicators and targets, and a crucial factor for the consolidation and development of democratic institutions and the achievement of the other MDGs. International IDEA thinks that the interlinkages between education, democratic institutions and the MDGs should be further stressed in the ongoing policy debates regarding the post-2015 development agenda.

International IDEA stands committed to strengthening its partnership with the United Nations to promote education for democracy.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/67/L.25, entitled "Education for democracy".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): In connection with draft resolution A/67/L.25, entitled "Education for democracy", I wish to put on record the following statement of financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

In paragraphs 7 and 9 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education to seek, in close cooperation with Member States, the views of Governments, United Nations agencies

and programmes, civil society and other relevant United Nations mandate holders, in order to consider including, in his next report to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, an update on Member States' efforts in the field of education for democracy; and invite Governments, agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to intensify their efforts to promote education for democracy; and request the Secretary-General, within existing reporting obligations, to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session on the implementation of the present resolution.

The request for documentation contained in paragraphs 7 and 9 will constitute an addition to the documentation workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management corresponding to an estimated amount of $113,200, which would be included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015. Hence the adoption of the draft resolution contained in document A/67/L.25 would not entail any additional appropriation under the programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.25.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Nakano (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in document A/67/L.25, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Austria, Belgium, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/67/L.25?

Draft resolution A/67/L.25 was adopted (resolution 67/18).

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 14, 113 and 119.

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.